ISD Institute for Strategic Dialogue

(https://www.isdglobal

ISD Explainers (/explainers/)

Overviews of issues, trends, narratives, platforms and actors.

# Far-Left Antisemitism

*By: Jakob Guhl (https://www.isdglobal.org/isd_team/jakob-guhl/)*

*12 July 2023*

## Introduction

As many on the far left[1] self-identify as anti-racist, far-left antisemitism[2] may sound like a contradiction in terms. Indeed, the antisemitism we most commonly see on the far left is different to what we find on the far right or in Islamist extremist contexts; it is rarely explicitly hateful, dehumanising or violent. At the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, much of our analysis of antisemitism online (https://www.isdglobal.org/hate-polarisation/antisemitism/) has therefore focussed on its more extreme manifestations.

However, while the most vicious antisemitic rhetoric and mobilisation tends to come from far right and Islamist extremists, far-left antisemitism nonetheless has a significant and pernicious impact on Jewish communities, stoking an increase in harassment, abuse and threats (https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/luciana-berger-labour-antisemitism-jeremy-corbyn-election-latest-liberal-democrats-finchley-a9196696.html) against Jews. 21% of the perpetrators of antisemitic harassment were described as "left-wing" by recipients of such abuse, according to a 2018 survey (https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2018/experiences-and-perceptions-antisemitism-second-survey-discrimination-and-hate) by the European Union's Fundamental Rights Agency among Jews in 12 European countries. Far-left antisemitism also contributes to making Jewish people feel unsafe in their own countries: at the peak of the antisemitism crisis in the UK Labour party in 2019, 42% of British Jews (https://www.survation.com/new-polling-of-british-jews-shows-tensions-remain-strong-between-labour-and-the-british-jewish-community/) said they would "seriously consider" leaving the country if the Labour leader at that time, Jeremy Corbyn, became Prime Minister. It is clearly vital to understand, expose and challenge antisemitism wherever it resides across the political spectrum.

Antisemitism on the left has a long history, starting from the ambivalent stances among Enlightenment thinkers toward Jewish emancipation and antisemitic sentiments expressed by some left-wing philosophers during the nineteenth century.[3] In the 20th century, antisemitic incidents in the Soviet Union and its

sphere of influence included the Slánský Trial[4] or the Doctor's Plot[5] in the early 1950's, but the persecution and institutional discrimination against Jews and simultaneously anti-Zionist as well as antisemitic propaganda remained a feature of the Soviet Union until its demise (the following section will discuss the differences and overlaps between anti-Zionism and antisemitism in greater detail).[6] In Germany, far left terrorist groups in the 1960's and 1970's carried out antisemitic violence,[7] plotted to bomb a synagogue[8] and celebrated terrorist attacks on Israeli civilians.[9]

While today such antisemitic violence from the far left is relatively rare, antisemitic incidents and rhetoric are still present in the broader political far left. Most recently, in the United Kingdom, the leadership of the Labour Party by Jeremy Corbyn between 2015 and 2019 was plagued by controversies around antisemitic incidents. These dynamics were also present online: an analysis by this author found that between 2015 and 2019, 56% of all comment sections about Jews and Israel on public Facebook pages supportive of the Labour Party contained at least one, and in the majority of cases more than one, antisemitic comment, and that in 59% of cases these comments went unchallenged.[10] In 2019, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) investigated Labour (https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/inquiries-and-investigations/investigation-labour-party) and found the party responsible for unlawful acts of harassment and discrimination over antisemitism within the party, and evidence of (unlawful) political interference in the handling of antisemitism complaints.

Given this long history of far-left antisemitism, it is important to understand where it comes from and how it manifests. This article therefore outlines four key areas in which far left politics may be vulnerable to antisemitism:

- Israel, Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism
- Conspiracy Mentality
- Intersectionality and Antisemitism
- Selective Solidarity and Conditional Antiracism

It is important to highlight that none of the issues that will be discussed below inherently shape or involve all those involved in far-left activism; rather these are trends that are common on the contemporary far left, and that provide an opening to antisemitism without inevitably leading to it.

# Israel, Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism

Surveys (https://archive.jpr.org.uk/object-uk450) conducted by the Institute for Jewish Policy Research in the UK show that there is a correlation between respondents who are critical of Israel and those who agree with antisemitic statements.[11] Crucially, these surveys also show that it is possible to be highly critical of Israeli behaviour without agreeing to any antisemitic statement. Similarly, the Community Security Trust (CST) and organisations set up in other countries (https://report-antisemitism.de/documents/RIAS_Berlin_-_Monitoring_-_Stop_doing_what_Hitler_did_to_you.pdf) to record antisemitic incidents have reported spikes in antisemitic hate crime (https://cst.org.uk/public/data/file/4/a/The_Month_of_Hate.pdf) whenever there is an escalation of the Israel-Palestine conflict. Clearly, there is a complex interplay between events in the Middle East and antisemitism abroad.

Israel has become perceived by many on the far left as an outpost of Western colonialism and imperialism. While not all critics of Israel and Zionism are far-left, anti-Israel and anti-Zionist positions have become a marker of political identity for the "anti-imperialist"[12] far left.[13] Of course, criticising the Israeli government's behaviour and policies or highlighting the historical and ongoing impact Zionism has had on Palestinians is not inherently antisemitic, especially when based on a framework of human rights and

international law. However, many observers have argued that hostility towards Israel and Zionism can be expressed in ways that are antisemitic. This presents the primary opening for contemporary far-left antisemitism.[14]

For example, the Working Definition of antisemitism by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) (https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-antisemitism) acknowledges that "criticism of Israel similar to that levelled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic" but provides a series of examples of when targeting may become antisemitic.[15] According to the IHRA definition it could be antisemitic to accuse Israel "of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust", reference classic antisemitic tropes such as the blood libel (https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/blood-libel) conspiracy myth to describe Israel or blame Jews collectively for the actions of Israel. For instance, an independent investigation (https://assets.nationbuilder.com/nus/pages/108/attachments/original/1673471780/Independent_Investigation_into_Antisemitism_Report_NUS_12_January_2023.pdf?1673471780) into antisemitism within the UK National Union of Students found that the NUS had failed to prevent antisemitic harassment and bullying (https://www.theguardian.com/news/2023/jan/12/jewish-students-suffered-antisemitic-bullying-within-nus-inquiry-finds) that employed blood libel tropes as well as Rothschild conspiracy theories (https://www.thejc.com/news/news/the-truth-about-those-rothschild-myths-1.450112) and held Jewish students responsible for actions of the Israeli state.

While the IHRA definition has been adopted or endorsed by many Jewish civil society organisations (https://www.worldjewishcongress.org/en/news/more-than-160-jewish-communities-and-organizations-across-the-globe-urge-un-to-use-ihra-working-definition-of-antisemitism-in-un-action-plan), 41 national governments (https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1oewGyFHsfkd3qciIJ9nZKHL4GoDtnEHo/edit#gid=1280818617) and European institutions (https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combatting-discrimination/racism-and-xenophobia/combating-antisemitism/definition-antisemitism_en) such as the European Parliament, Commission and Council, it has also been widely criticised. Human rights organisations (https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/4/4/rights-groups-urge-un-not-to-adopt-ihra-anti-semitism-definition) and free speech activists (https://www.hepi.ac.uk/2021/02/17/response-to-the-announcement-on-free-speech-and-academic-freedom-by-dr-arif-ahmed/) have argued that IHRA stifles freedom of expression by conflating (some) criticism of Zionism and Israel with antisemitism.

These disagreements are often fierce, even though there is much common ground between supporters and opponents of the IHRA definition. Both believe that criticism of Israeli policies and behaviour is not in principle antisemitic, and both agree that criticism of Israel can be expressed in antisemitic ways or be motivated by antisemitic views. The disagreements revolve around where to draw the line between legitimate criticism of Israel and attacks on Israel that single it out because it is a Jewish state. The most contentious debates regard the questions of whether double standards against Israel (the idea that Israel is singled out and judged more harshly than other countries that have similar or worse human rights records),[16] opposition to Israel's existence as a Jewish state, or analogies to Nazi Germany and Apartheid South Africa are antisemitic.[17]

The IHRA definition takes a more expansive view of antisemitism on these questions, arguing that double standards, Nazi analogies and opposition to Jewish self-determination may constitute antisemitism. By drawing these lines, the IHRA definition's authors seek to challenge those who minimise the Holocaust, who treat Israel differently than other countries because it is Jewish or who seek to delegitimise it while not questioning the existence and legitimacy of other nation states. Lastly, the IHRA definition aims to prevent discrimination against Jews due to their views on Israel and Zionism. As opposition to Israel and Zionism has become a central focus for the far left, the debates around definitions of antisemitism and the boundaries between legitimate criticism of Israel and antisemitism are of particular relevance for the far left.

Some of the more influential competing definitions include the Jerusalem Declaration of Antisemitism (https://jerusalemdeclaration.org/) (JDA) and the Nexus Document (https://israelandantisemitism.com/the-nexus-document/). These definitions diverge from or seek to clarify perceived ambiguities within the examples provided by the IHRA. Its authors seem particularly concerned about protecting the freedom of expression of those who advocate for the human rights of Palestinians as well as their national and political right to self-determination and preserve their ability highlight and commemorate historical injustice without being identified as antisemitic.

Regarding alleged double standards against Israel, the JDA argues that "political speech does not have to be measured, proportional, tempered, or reasonable to be protected" under human rights law and that not every "unreasonable" criticism of Israel is automatically antisemitic, while the Nexus Document similarly makes the case that disproportionate focus on Israel could be motivated by factors other than antisemitism. While neither the JDA nor the Nexus Document explicitly mention Nazi analogies, one could interpret them to imply that even though Nazi analogies may be inaccurate, they are not automatically antisemitic. Proponents of the IHRA's definition however claim (https://fathomjournal.org/why-the-nazi-analogy-and-holocaust-inversion-are-antisemitic/) that such analogies objectively diminish the scale and nature of the Nazi genocide, independent of whether this is intended or if it is a feature of a wider political discourse that over-relies on flawed analogies to Nazi crimes.

Similarly, JDA and Nexus take more lenient stances on anti-Zionism, arguing that it may be motivated by opposition to all forms of nationalism or by the dispossession experienced by Palestinians due to the creation of Israel. Relatedly, the JDA argues that support for a binational state with full equality of all citizens is not antisemitic, even though this would imply the end of Israel as a Jewish state. One prominent author who has recently proposed such an arrangement is Peter Beinart, who has argued (https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/08/opinion/israel-annexation-two-state-solution.html) that the essence of Zionism is not a Jewish state but a Jewish home, and that instead of further pursuing a two-state solution it has become necessary to "embrace the goal of equal rights for Jews and Palestinians" in one state.

The IHRA definition on the other hand lists "denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g. by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavour" as a form of antisemitism. This has sometimes been interpreted (https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/04/04/human-rights-and-other-civil-society-groups-urge-united-nations-respect-human) to mean that according to the IHRA it could be antisemitic to call Israeli policies racist, or to argue that the formation of Israel led to the displacement of Palestinians. However, the specific wording emphasises that it would be antisemitic to deny the Jewish people their right to self-determination, and hence refers to "a state of Israel" rather than "the state of Israel." Rather than stigmatising factual criticism regarding Israeli policies or its history, the aim is to prevent Jewish people from being treated differently than every other people whose right to self-determination should (in principle) be respected. Nevertheless, the JDA and Nexus sought to clarify this ambiguity by stating that to "point out systematic racial discrimination" or "to compare Israel with other historical cases, including settler-colonialism or apartheid" is not intrinsically antisemitic. From this point of view, the assessment of human rights organisations like B'Tselem (https://www.btselem.org/publications/fulltext/202101_this_is_apartheid), Human Rights Watch (https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/27/threshold-crossed/israeli-authorities-and-crimes-apartheid-and-persecution) and Amnesty International (https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/02/israels-apartheid-against-palestinians-a-cruel-system-of-domination-and-a-crime-against-humanity/) that Israel is committing Apartheid[18] would not be considered antisemitic, as all these organisations explicitly state that they believe this to be an evidence-based description of Israeli policies rather than of the inherent nature of Zionism. As the IHRA definition does not directly refer to the Apartheid charge, supporters of the definitions may diverge in their assessment of whether it is synonymous with calling "a state of Israel a racist endeavour."

Lastly, the JDA addresses the debate around the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement. BDS is an

international campaign that calls for the boycott of Israeli goods, divestment from companies involved in the occupation of Arab territories, and sanctions to force the Israeli government to comply with international law and respect the rights of Palestinians, including the right of return for Palestinian refugees. Inspired by the boycott campaign against Apartheid South Africa, BDS has attracted many supporters, especially on the far left, but has also caused controversy. Critics have claimed that BDS is antisemitic as it singles out and delegitimises Israel's existence rather than merely opposing its policies and behaviour. The JDA however argues that boycotts are "commonplace, non-violent forms of political protest against states" and not inherently antisemitic. While the IHRA definition does not specifically mention BDS, the definition was cited in the 2019 German Bundestag's resolution (https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/19/101/1910191.pdf) that condemned the movement as antisemitic. The debate around BDS is complex: many of its core demands are clearly not antisemitic, and since the movement lacks a central leadership that would issue official stances, it is difficult to make blanket statements about the movement as a whole. Nevertheless, accusations that BDS supporters employ antisemitic rhetoric (https://www.adl.org/resources/report/anti-israel-activism-us-campuses-2021-2022) about malign Jewish influence and reported incidents of harassment (https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/dec/29/soas-repay-students-15000-fees-over-toxic-antisemitic-environment) or intimidation (https://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/scared-away-as-hate-grows-at-soas-1.65460) of Jewish students on campus should be taken seriously.

# Conspiracy Mentality

Antisemitism is a form of racism that is often centred around conspiracy theories. Conspiracy theories are attempts to explain a phenomenon by invoking a sinister plot orchestrated by powerful actors. Where conspiracy theories identify Jewish individuals or collectives as the powerful conspirators, they are likely antisemitic as they play on tropes that have been used to marginalise and justify persecution of Jews. As the IHRA definition states, "the myth about a world Jewish conspiracy or of Jews controlling the media, economy, government or other societal institutions" is a key form of antisemitism.

The frequent identification of Jews as the puppet-masters pulling the strings behind the conspiracy does not happen by accident. Instead, antisemitic conspiracy theories draw on age-old tropes about Jewish moneylenders (https://jewishmuseum.org.uk/2019/01/31/jews-money-myth/), blood libel accusations and the Rothschilds, among others. These tropes were perhaps most famously summarised in the 19th century forgery, "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion" (https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/protocols-of-the-elders-of-zion), which claims to document a meeting by an international Jewish conspiracy that is controlling world politics.

As supporters of conspiracy theories usually see themselves in direct opposition to the status quo and the powerful, these theories are attractive for some on the far left who similarly seek to challenge systemic social and economic inequality. According to large-scale surveys (https://www.nature.com/articles/s41562-021-01258-7#Sec6), conspiracy mentality (the tendency to explain significant events as the result of a plot by clandestine and powerful actors)[19] is common on the far left (though less common than on the far right). As antisemitism is often centred around the idea that there is a global Jewish conspiracy, it should not be surprising that studies (https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-023-01624-y) have found that antisemitic attitudes are correlated to conspiracy mentality (https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1002/per.1930), especially when respondents believe Jewish people to be powerful and/ or privileged.

As mentioned above, antisemitic tropes around powerful and wealthy Jewish people are culturally deeply engrained (https://www.anderson.ucla.edu/faculty_pages/nico.v/Research/Persecution_Perpetuated_QJE.pdf), meaning that individuals may not always be consciously aware of them. This means that it is possible for people on the far left, who may identify themselves as anti-racist, to nevertheless reproduce ways of talking about e.g. the banking system, the media or the elites that are

shaped by the cultural legacy of antisemitic conspiracy theories while believing themselves to be speaking truth to power rather than attacking a minority community.

According to the Nexus Document, conspiracy theories that refer to Israel may be antisemitic when they baselessly attribute "injustices around the world on a hidden Jewish conspiracy or of being the maligning hand of Israel or Zionism." Examples for this include a 2012 interview (https://www.jewishnews.co.uk/corbyn-suspected-hand-of-israel-in-egypt-bombing-during-press-tv-interview/) for the Iranian state broadcaster Press TV in which former UK Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn (without evidence) asserted that he "suspected the hand of Israel" behind a Salafi-jihadist terrorist attack in Egypt, or actress Maxine Peake claiming in 2020 that the death of George Floyd could be attributed to "seminars taught by Israeli secret services."[20] According to a research report (https://counterhate.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/State-Hate-CCDH-FINAL.pdf), Press TV's "Palestine Declassified" program, which primarily addresses a left-wing audience, also regularly spreads conspiracy theories about Zionists controlling world events, the media and entertainment industry, and grooming children into Zionism.[21] According to the report, this includes claims that Zionists and the US intelligence services colluded to instigate anti-regime protests in Iran following the murder of Mahsa Amini (https://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2022/oct/31/mapping-irans-unrest-how-mahsa-aminis-death-led-to-nationwide-protests).

Other antisemitic conspiracy theories on the far left may be entirely unrelated to Israel and Zionism. For example, in 2016, the vice chair of the pro-Labour activist group Momentum, Jackie Walker, alleged (https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/antisemitism-row-momentum-organiser-jackie-walker-readmitted-to-labour-party-following-racism-allegations-a7053966.html) that Jews were the "chief financiers of the sugar and slave trade."[22] Similarly, a mural "Freedom of Humanity" (image 1) by the graffiti artist Mear One in the London borrow of Tower Hamlets was removed after it was criticised for perpetuating antisemitic stereotypes about Jews having a disproportionate, socially harmful influence on finance and politics and oppressing the working class. In response to the protests, Mear One stated (https://www.thejc.com/comment/opinion/not-sure-why-that-mural-is-antisemitic-let-me-explain-1.461503) that "some of the older white Jewish folk in the local community had an issue with me portraying their beloved #Rothschild or #Warburg etc. as the demons they are." These examples show antisemitic conspiracy theories coming from far left actors who believe themselves to be challenging the powerful and standing up for the disenfranchised while (consciously or unconsciously) parroting antisemitic tropes.

Image 1: Photograph of the "Freedom of Humanity" mural, which was removed after it was criticised for perpetuating antisemitic stereotypes.

# Intersectionality and Antisemitism

Another opening for antisemitism on the contemporary far left are simplistic interpretations of the concept of intersectionality. Intersectionality is a term originally coined by the legal scholar Kimberly Crenshaw (https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2019/5/20/18542843/intersectionality-conservatism-law-race-gender-discrimination) that emphasises that different forms of oppression and exclusion overlap and intersect with each other. Proponents of intersectional approaches have often sought to highlight "privilege" as the flipside to oppression, drawing on concepts such as "white privilege" or "male privilege" to emphasise the interplay between identities and structural forms of inequality and subtle discrimination. Since (Ashkenazi) Jews are often perceived to be "white" (https://politicalresearch.org/2017/06/29/skin-in-the-game-how-antisemitism-animates-white-nationalism), and by extension "powerful" and "privileged" from an intersectional point of view, antisemitism is consequently seen as a lesser form of racism (https://forward.com/opinion/393107/how-anti-semitisms-true-origin-makes-it-invisible-to-the-left/), or not racism at all. This line of thinking ultimate leads its adherents to believe that in the struggle for equality "Jews don't count."[23]

A recent example of this line of thinking was a letter submitted to The Guardian newspaper by Labour MP Diane Abbot who suggested that Jewish people (as well as Irish and Traveller people) "undoubtedly experience prejudice" but "are not all their lives subject to racism." From this perspective, antisemitism may be a regrettable form of individual bigotry, but it is seen as something that should be of less concern as for example anti-Black or anti-Muslim racism. [24]

A related issue to the refusal to view antisemitism as key concern for the far left may be an unwillingness to condemn it when it comes from individuals or groups that experience oppression. In 2018, Women's March founders Tamika Mallory and Linda Sarsour were widely criticised (https://www.vox.com/identities/2018/12/21/18145176/feminism-womens-march-2018-2019-farrakhan-intersectionality) for refusing to disavow the Nation of Islam (NOI), after it had been revealed that Mallory had attended a speech of NOI founder Louis Farrakhan in which he had accused Jews, among other things, of using drugs to "feminize" black men (https://www.adl.org/resources/blog/farrakhan-rails-against-jews-israel-and-us-government-wide-ranging-saviours-day). In a letter reflecting upon these debates, Sarsour referred to Farrakhan as "a Black man who has no institutional power."[25]

# Selective Solidarity and Conditional Antiracism

In his 2019 book (https://kahn-harris.org/book/strange-hate-antisemitism-racism-and-the-limits-of-diversity/) "Strange Hate: Antisemitism, Racism and the Limits of Diversity", Keith Kahn-Harris made the case the part of the controversies around antisemitism on the far left are caused by selective or conditional forms of antiracism (as well as selective opposition to antisemitism). Instead of opposing antisemitism in principle, Jews are separated into Jews who, from a far-left perspective, are "good" and hence worthy of solidarity and "bad" Jews whose concerns about antisemitism can be dismissed as cynical or politically motivated. Opposition to antisemitism thus becomes conditional and ends up being merely a defence of Jews perceived to be progressive.

It should be noted that similar patterns of selective solidarity can be observed regarding other groups as well. Among those on the far left whose central belief is the opposition to US imperialism, national and religious groups are often implicitly divided into "good" or "bad", depending on if they are believed to be aligned with the US (https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/a-letter-to-the-western-left-from-kyiv/). Among others, Syrians (https://libcom.org/article/anti-imperialism-idiots-leila-al-shami), Ukrainians and Uyghurs (https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/uyghur-genocide-left-anti-muslim-b2054640.html) are

therefore described by some on the far left as puppets of the US, while their oppressors are viewed as part of the "resistance" to US-imperialism and capitalism. The atrocities committed against by these regimes are then being denied, downplayed or portrayed (https://deadlydisinformation.org/) as part of a greater US or Zionist conspiracy, while insurgents defending themselves against war crimes committed by state forces are (falsely) homogenised as "jihadists" or "fascists." (https://www.isdglobal.org/digital_dispatches/contextualising-rhetoric-around-fascism-targeting-ukraine-and-western-support/) This line of thinking ultimately leads to what Dave Hirsch has described as a "politics of position" (https://research.gold.ac.uk/id/eprint/14686/1/The%20Corbyn%20left%20f.pdf) rather than a politics driven by principles like human rights, democracy and equality.

# Further Reading

Hirsh, David. Contemporary left antisemitism. Routledge, 2017.

Kahn-Harris, Keith. Strange hate: Antisemitism, racism and the limits of diversity. Watkins Media Limited, 2019.

Lipstadt, Deborah E. *Antisemitism: Here and now*. Scribe, 2019.

Rich, Dave. "The Left's Jewish Problem: Jeremy Corbyn." Israel and Anti-Semitism (London: Biteback, 2016).

Spencer, Philip, and Robert Fine. Antisemitism and the left: On the return of the Jewish question. Manchester University Press, 2018.

Ullrich, Peter. Deutsche, Linke und der Nahostkonflikt: Politik im Antisemitismus-und Erinnerungsdiskurs. Wallstein, 2013.

Ward, Eric. "Skin in the Game." Political Research Associates, June 29 (2017).

# End Notes

1. There is no broadly agreed upon definition of the far left, and the scholarship on such groups in contemporary Western societies is much less developed than research on the far right. Far left groups, actions or networks are typically rooted in Marxist, socialist or anarchist ideologies, and pursue an anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist and radically egalitarian, anti-fascist agenda, typically with an internationalist outlook. Following Mudde and political researcher Luke March, and resonating with the differentiation of the far right, a distinction should be made between left-wing radicalism and extremism, where the latter groups are anti-democratic, and the former advocate fundamental political and economic changes without being anti-democratic per se.
2. A key distinction can be made between "antisemitism on the (far-)left" and "antisemitism of the (far-)left." The former term refers to antisemitism that can be found on the far left as it is shaped by antisemitism in wider society, while the latter term highlights that there are forms of antisemitism that are specific to or more common among the far left. While the distinction between antisemitism on and of the far left is not always straightforward, this Explainer is mainly focussed on why the far left

specifically may be vulnerable to antisemitism. See: https://transformativestudies.org/wp-content/uploads/Marcel-Stoetzler.pdf (https://transformativestudies.org/wp-content/uploads/Marcel-Stoetzler.pdf)

3. For a concise intellectual history of antisemitism on the left since the Enlightenment see: Spencer, Philip, and Robert Fine. Antisemitism and the left: On the return of the Jewish question. Manchester University Press, 2018.
4. Rudolf Slansky, a high-ranking member of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, and 13 other defendants who were mostly Jewish, were accused of being agents of Zionism and Western imperialism. While there was no proof for these accusations, prosecutors relied on forced confessions and fabricated evidence to implicate the defendants and portray them as disloyal to the state and subservient to Jewish interests abroad. 11 of them were executed, the remainder received life sentences. The Slánský Trial had a deep impact on the Czechoslovakian Jewish community, as Jewish culture was increasingly marginalised. https://forward.com/culture/525465/rudolf-slansky-antisemitic-show-trial-execution-czechoslovakia/ (https://forward.com/culture/525465/rudolf-slansky-antisemitic-show-trial-execution-czechoslovakia/)
5. A number of prominent Jewish doctors were accused of planning to assassinate Soviet leaders in the early 1950's, with state-controlled media arguing this was part of a wider anti-Soviet Jewish conspiracy. After Stalin's death, Khrushchev dismissed the Doctor's plot allegations as a fabricated conspiracy theory. It nevertheless contributed to increasing antisemitism in the Soviet Union and suspicion towards Jews, leading many Jews to seek emigration. Figes, Orlando. Revolutionary Russia, 1891-1991. 2014, p. 341-342.
6. This is not to say that antisemitism in the Soviet Union was equivalent to Nazi Germany. As the historian Anne Applebaum points to in her seminal study of the Gulag, "the definition of 'enemy' in the Soviet Union was always more slippery than the definition of 'Jew' in Nazi Germany" (p. 23). In the Soviet Union, who was marked as the out-group frequently changed according to political circumstances and the decisions of political leaders. This meant that the situation of the Jews varied over time. Additionally, there was no Soviet equivalent to the Nazis' extermination camps. While millions died in the Gulag, its purpose was primarily economic. See: Applebaum, Anne. Gulag: A history. Penguin Books, 2003.
7. In 1976, two members of the Revolutionary Cells (RZ), a far-left German terrorist group, and two members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), hijacked an Air France machine and flew it to Entebbe, where they were welcomed by Ugandan dictator Idi Amin. Over the following days, the hijackers separated the Israeli and several non-Israeli Jews (including Holocaust survivors) from the rest of the hostages, who were then released. A surprise raid by the Israeli Defence Forces freed 102 of 106 hostages. 45 Ugandan soldiers, the four hijackers and Yonathan Netanyahu (the older brother of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who led the operation) were killed. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jun/25/entebbe-raid-40-years-on-israel-palestine-binyamin-netanyahu-jonathan-freedland (https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jun/25/entebbe-raid-40-years-on-israel-palestine-binyamin-netanyahu-jonathan-freedland)
8. On 9 November 1969, a far-left militant group called Tupamaros West-Berlin planted a bomb in a Berlin

synagogue which failed to explode because of a dysfunctional detonator. The date for the plot was chosen to coincide with the anniversary of the 1938 antisemitic pogroms. Kraushaar, Wolfgang. Die Bombe im Jüdischen Gemeindehaus. Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2005.

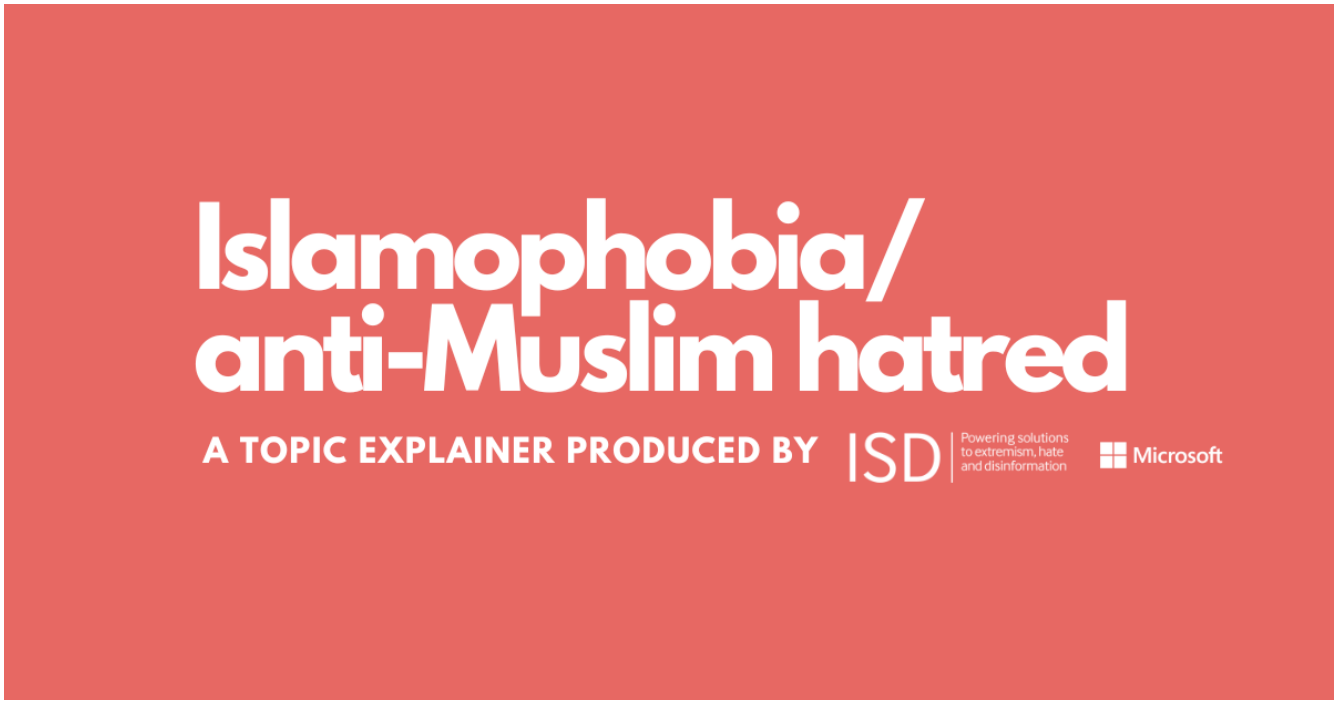
9. Ulrike Meinhof, the leader of the far-left terrorist group Red Army Faction, described the perpetrators of the 1972 Munich Olympic Games attack as "a brave commando against Zionist soldiers, who pretended to be athletes in Munich." Authors translation of quote from: Ullrich, Peter. "Projektionsfläche Naher Osten. PalästinenserInnen, Israelis und die radikale deutsche Linke bei der Selbstzerfleischung." Kultursoziologie. Aspekte, Analysen, Argumente (2002), p. 112
10. Guhl, Jakob. "Everyone I know isn't antisemitic." Antisemitism on Social Media (2022): 55.
11. Other survey-based studies which have come to similar conclusions include Kaplan, Edward H., and Charles A. Small. "Anti-Israel sentiment predicts anti-Semitism in Europe." Journal of Conflict Resolution 50.4 (2006): 548-561 and Cohen, Florette, et al. "Modern anti-Semitism and anti-Israeli attitudes." Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 97.2 (2009): 290. Some studies suggest a modest but significant correlation between the two, such as Beattie, Peter. "Anti-Semitism and opposition to Israeli government policies: the roles of prejudice and information." Ethnic and Racial Studies 40.15 (2017): 2749-2767 and Shenhav-Goldberg, Rachel, and Jeffrey S. Kopstein. "Antisemitism on a California campus: Perceptions and views among students." Contemporary Jewry 40 (2020): 237-258. Lastly, one study finds that respondents on the far left who are critical of Israel are more likely to employ double standards against Jews but are much less likely than the respondents on the far right to hold overtly antisemitic views. Hersh, Eitan, and Laura Royden. "Antisemitic Attitudes Across the Ideological Spectrum." Political Research Quarterly (2021): 10659129221111081.
12. Anti-imperialism refers to the opposition to systems of domination, occupation and political control of one power or group of powers over other countries and peoples. Among the Western far left, anti-imperialism is often expressed through a rejection of Western military interventions abroad, support for national liberation movements and opposition to (Western-led) economic globalisation. However, some observers have criticised Western "anti-imperialists" for a selective application of their principles, arguing that many Western "anti-imperialists" primarily challenge Western imperialism while ignoring or even defending imperial actions by authoritarian states that are opposed to the West. https://newpol.org/issue_post/internationalism-anti-imperialism-and-the-origins-of-campism/ (https://newpol.org/issue_post/internationalism-anti-imperialism-and-the-origins-of-campism/)
13. Rich, Dave. "The Left's Jewish Problem: Jeremy Corbyn." Israel and Anti-Semitism (London: Biteback, 2016).
14. It should be noted that far-left actors have also combined antisemitism with pro-Israel policies in the past. The example of Romania's relationship with the Jewish state during the Cold War is a case in point. According to declassified files from the Israel State Archives, Israeli officials were convinced that the communist Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu allied himself with Israel because he believed in a powerful international Jewish conspiracy that could help him gain political and economic support from the US. In Ceaușescu's case, it was therefore specific antisemitic beliefs that led him to support Israel. This further highlights that while far-left antisemitism often intersects with negative views towards

Israel, people on the far left may be vulnerable to antisemitic ideas even when they support the Jewish state. https://www.972mag.com/israel-romanian-dictator-anti-semitism/

15. Crucially, the IHRA definition states that "the overall context" should be considered when assessing whether something is, or is not, antisemitic.
16. The idea that there is a double standard against Israel has regularly been challenged as well. Critics argue that rather than being too critical, Western media outlets often use language that suggests a false equivalence between two conflicting parties, thereby ignoring the broader context of the occupation and military imbalance between Israel and the Palestinians. https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20220823-deliberate-misrepresentation-western-media-bias-makes-israeli-war-on-palestinians-possible/ (https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20220823-deliberate-misrepresentation-western-media-bias-makes-israeli-war-on-palestinians-possible/) Others have accused Western mainstream media outlets using language that implicitly frames incidents in favour of Israel, for example by using passive language to describe the killing (e.g. "died" or "lost of her life") of the Palestinian-American Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, who was shot by an Israeli sniper in May 2022. https://www.media-diversity.org/reporting-of-shireen-abu-aqlas-murder-highliughts-biased-journalism-practices-in-western-media%EF%BF%BC/ (https://www.media-diversity.org/reporting-of-shireen-abu-aqlas-murder-highliughts-biased-journalism-practices-in-western-media%EF%BF%BC/)
17. A smaller difference in emphasis concerns the idea that accusing Jews of being more loyal to Israel than their own Nations is antisemitic. The IHRA definition lists such as accusations as an example of contemporary antisemitism, as they portray Jews as disloyal and unpatriotic, which also plays into deep-rooted antisemitic stereotypes about Jews being "rootless cosmopolitans " (a term used in the Soviet Union to refer to Jews allegedly disloyal to the country, see: https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2019/05/no-direction-home-the-tragedy-of-the-jewish-left (https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2019/05/no-direction-home-the-tragedy-of-the-jewish-left)). The JDA and the NEXUS document add slight caveats, stating that it would be antisemitic to assume Jews are "necessarily more loyal to Israel than to their own countries" (JDA) or "a priori incapable of setting aside their loyalty to the Jewish people and/or Israel" (NEXUS). These formulations thereby account for the scenario that some Jews really may be more loyal to Israel than their own nations, while acknowledging that it would be antisemitic to automatically infer this from a person's Jewish identity.
18. The discussions around Israel and Apartheid revolve around two distinct accusations: first, that Israel is like Apartheid South Africa and second, that Israel is committing the crime of Apartheid as defined under international law. While public debate often centres around the differences and similarities between Israel and Apartheid South Africa, the reports by B'Tselem, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International do not claim that Israel is exactly like Apartheid South Africa.
19. Conspiracy mentality has been defined as "the tendency to attribute these events [significant political to a secret plot by a covert alliance of powerful individuals or to clandestine organizations rather than to more mundane human (in)activity or natural forces." Imhoff, Roland, and Martin Bruder. "Speaking (un–) truth to power: Conspiracy mentality as a generalised political attitude." European Journal of Personality 28.1 (2014): 25-43.

20. Peake later apologised, saying that she had been "inaccurate in [her] assumption of American police training and its sources." The actress seems to have been referring to the fact that some American police forces (including in Minnesota where Floyd was murdered by a police officer) have trained with Israeli security forces. There is no indication that any of the officers involved in the murder of Floyd had participated in any training with Israeli security forces or intelligence services or that kneeling techniques were taught at a 2012 event with Minneapolis Police and the Israeli Consulate. Additionally, kneeling techniques such as the one that killed Floyd had been allowed by Minneapolis Police years before the 2012 event. https://www.channel4.com/news/factcheck/factcheck-did-israeli-secret-service-teach-floyd-police-to-kneel-on-neck (https://www.channel4.com/news/factcheck/factcheck-did-israeli-secret-service-teach-floyd-police-to-kneel-on-neck)
21. "Palestine Declassified" is hosted by the former Labour MP Chris Williamson and produced by former Bristol University Sociology professor David Miller.
22. The antisemitic claims mirror allegations made in the 1991 book The Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews, published by the Nation of Islam, which has been designated as a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center due to its "deeply racist, antisemitic and anti-gay rhetoric." https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/nation-islam (https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/nation-islam)
23. Baddiel, David. Jews don't count: how identity politics failed one particular identity. TLS, 2021.
24. Abbott had the party whip withdrawn and later apologised for her letter. https://fathomjournal.org/opinion-the-meaning-of-diane-abbotts-astonishing-letter/ (https://fathomjournal.org/opinion-the-meaning-of-diane-abbotts-astonishing-letter/)
25. Sarsour, Linda. A Letter on Loyalty, Agency, Unity and the Farrakhan Controversy. Archived here: https://web.archive.org/web/20181119150226/https://mavenroundtable.io/lindasarsour/politics/a-letter-on-loyalty-agency-unity-and-the-farrakhan-controversy-EqyktSghwkywYL1jKsADdQ/ (https://web.archive.org/web/20181119150226/https://mavenroundtable.io/lindasarsour/politics/a-letter-on-loyalty-agency-unity-and-the-farrakhan-controversy-EqyktSghwkywYL1jKsADdQ/)

Related


Islamophobia/
anti-Muslim hatred
A TOPIC EXPLAINER PRODUCED BY ISD Powering solutions to extremism, hate and disinformation Microsoft

(https://www.isdglobal.org/explainers/islamophobia-anti-muslim-hatred/)

## Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred (https://www.isdglobal.org/explainers/islamophobia-anti-muslim-hatred/)

Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate involve dehumanizing, expressing contempt, demonizing, harassing, threatening or inciting violence based on an individual or community's Muslim identity (or perceived identity).

Gen Z Digital
Salafism
A TOPIC EXPLAINER PRODUCED BY ISD Powering solutions to extremism, hate and disinformation Microsoft

(https://www.isdglobal.org/explainers/gen-z-digital-salafism/)

## Gen Z Digital Salafism (https://www.isdglobal.org/explainers/gen-z-digital-salafism/)

Salafism has proven attractive to Gen Z Muslims as an emerging youth counterculture. Its black-and-white views, rules-based value system, strong group identity, and provocative contrasts to the orthodoxies of the Islamic establishment resonate with this younger generation.

(https://www.isdglobal.org/explainers/rumble-video-platform/)

## Rumble (https://www.isdglobal.org/explainers/rumble-video-platform/)

Rumble ist eine Videoplattform, die sich als YouTube-Alternative sieht und wegen ihrer undurchsichtigen Moderationspraxis bei Rechtsextremen beliebt ist

ABOUT (HTTPS://WWW.ISDGLOBAL.ORG/ABOUT/)
INDEPENDENCE & ETHICS (HTTPS://WWW.ISDGLOBAL.ORG/OUR-INDEPENDENCE/)
PARTNERSHIPS & FUNDERS (HTTPS://WWW.ISDGLOBAL.ORG/PARTNERSHIPS-AND-FUNDERS/)
PRIVACY POLICY (HTTPS://WWW.ISDGLOBAL.ORG/PRIVACY-POLICY/)
COMPLAINTS POLICY (HTTPS://WWW.ISDGLOBAL.ORG/COMPLAINTS-POLICY/)
CONTACT (HTTPS://WWW.ISDGLOBAL.ORG/CONTACT-US/)

Follow us on Social Media:

(https://www.facebook.com/ISDglobal)

(https://twitter.com/ISDglobal)

(https://www.linkedin.com/company/isdglobal/)

**ISD**

Amman | Berlin | London | Paris | Washington DC

Copyright © Institute for Strategic Dialogue (2023). Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) is a company limited by guarantee, registered office address PO Box 75769, London, SW1P 9ER. ISD is registered in England with company registration number 06581421 and registered charity number 1141069. All Rights Reserved. Any copying, reproduction or exploitation of the whole or any part of this website without prior written approval from ISD is prohibited.